

Talking Shop



Mechanics sound off on what to look for in a lift, what tools are absolutely essential to their jobs and what they would create if they were “manufacturers for a day”

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(Editor's Note: The participants in this discussion are all members of the Online Turf Equipment Technicians Association. You can find out more about the group at www.oteta.org.)

No one ever knew what lurked deep in the hearts of golf course mechanics — until now. *Golfdom* went to the source to find out what these vital employees think about lifts, what tools they couldn't live without, and what tools they would like to have that aren't currently being produced. Here are some of their answers.

Q. What do you look for in a lift to fulfill your basic mechanical needs? What would you like to see improved on lifts?

Bill Hughes, turf equipment manager/technician, Forest Dunes Golf and CC, Roscommon, Mich.: I want a lift with no floor obstruction and one that can be adapted from one piece of equipment to another. The Trion lift we purchased recently meets all of my expectations. I'd like to have a higher ceiling in my shop because I can't raise the equipment high enough to access all of the components easily as it is.

Eric Kulaas, equipment manager, Renaissance Vinoy Resort & GC, St. Petersburg, Fla.: Price is secondary to performance. This is a capital piece of equipment — meaning that it will be around for a long time. Paying \$1,000 or \$2,000 more to get the lift you really want is immaterial over a 15-year lifespan. I would also look for a lift that is easy to use, designed specifically for turf equipment and has a good reputation. I'd also like to see a 2-foot higher ceiling in my shop.

Craig Cassaday, equipment manager, Merion GC, Ardmore, Pa.: I'm looking for something versatile. Right now, I've got one lift for trucks and another for turf equipment. You have to maintain two because if you only get a car lift and have to adapt it every time you want to work on a piece of turf equipment, it can take you two to four hours to change it over. So versatility is something that I think needs to be improved significantly on lifts.

Steve Spuhler, equipment manager, Merrill Hills CC, Waukesha, Wis.: I would look for something that will allow you to adapt it to all types of wheelbases and frame sizes. I'd like to see the manufacturers add a sliding swivel hoist to the lift to make it easier for me to put the heavy fairway and rough reels on a workbench. It would also let me tilt big rotary decks so I can work on them easily.

Q. What are the shop tools you absolutely can't live without?

Cassaday: I'd say that I'd start with a lift and then go from there. I think mechanics also need a bench grinder, a parts washer,

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Mike Friedman, Superintendent of The Links at Lang Farm in Burlington, VT

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a welding iron, a shop vice and a shop press. I also recommend that you have a set of oxygen and acetylene torches. You must have these tools so when the superintendent comes and says, 'Can you make me a tool that will do X?' you can say, 'Absolutely.' ”

Spuhler: I would list my Accu-Gauge, a Rubbermaid stepstool and my creeper. I have 16 walking greens mowers, and I use all of these tools to make sure they're in the best condition possible before they go out every day. I tilt the walker backwards on to the stepstool at about a 45-degree angle. Then I roll in front and check the front face of the bedknife for any damage — cleats, small stones and other debris. Then I check the bench cut and the height of cut, and it's ready to go. It takes three to five minutes per walker — if there are no problems — with the tools I mentioned.

Hughes: I couldn't get through my day without the Trion lift, a Foley AccuMaster 650 reel grinder, the Foley AccuPro 670 bed-knife grinder and the Ingersol Rand air compressor (with its associated air-powered tools).

Kulaas: My needs are practical. I need a good set of wrenches, screwdrivers and sockets. I need an oxygen/acetylene torch, pri-

marily for cutting and heating. I need a welder, and an inexpensive band saw for cutting metal. (Some of my colleagues would consider this a luxury, but I've had the same one for 11 years. It cost \$250 when it was new and has been a great value because of its longevity.) Any mechanic worth his or her salt needs a good set of reel and bedknife grinders and a lift, which is by far the most productive piece of equipment in the shop.

Q. **If you could request that shop tool manufacturers create a new tool to meet a previously unmet need, what would it be?**

Hughes: I can't think of a tool that I would use that isn't already in production. I don't have all the tools I would like to have, but that's because of a lack of cash on our end, not a lack of availability.

Kulaas: We're pretty good at making our own tools, so I can't think of anything I need that isn't being manufactured already.

Cassaday: I'd like to see the mower manufacturers add an on-the-mower reel-sharpening tool so I wouldn't have to spend so much time in the shop taking them off and sharpening them. It would reduce the downtime of the mower, and it would streamline the system considerably. ■



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